

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
HUNTERS POND DAM REMOVAL PROJECT
SCITUATE, MASSACHUSETTS**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), in partnership with the Town of Scituate, the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration, Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management, North and South Rivers Watershed Association, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, are proposing to remove the Hunters Pond Dam (a.k.a. the Mordecai Lincoln Road Pond Dam) (Dam) on Bound Brook in Scituate, Massachusetts. The purpose of the Hunters Pond Dam Removal Project (Project) is to restore fish passage and natural ecological processes to Bound Brook and eliminate risks to life and property associated with the existing obsolete Dam.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulation [CFR] 1500-1508), and the implementing regulation (36 CFR 800). The EA analyzes the impacts of two alternatives on the human environment, including the *Proposed Action - Dam Removal* and a *No Action Alternative*. One additional alternative was considered early on in the analysis and dismissed due to it being determined infeasible.

The Proposed Action will have a net ecological benefit by reconnecting 5 miles of riverine channel and access to nearly 200 total acres of diadromous fish spawning habitat in Lily Pond and the Aaron River reservoir. Fish species expected to benefit from the Project include alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*), blueback herring (*Alosa aestivalis*), American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*), rainbow smelt (*Osmerus mordax*) and other aquatic organisms within the watershed. The Project complements the Service's ongoing efforts to restore diadromous and resident fishery populations within the Gulf of Maine. The Project will also enhance public safety by eliminating the potential of a catastrophic dam breach that would likely damage the downstream public bridge, roadway, and/or residences. Under the No Action Alternative, the Dam would be left in place and historical spawning and rearing habitat would continue to be inaccessible to migratory fishes. The threat of a catastrophic failure of the Dam would also continue to exist.

The Proposed Action would remove the Hunters Pond Dam concrete spillway, repair the raceway running under the historic Mordecai Lincoln Mill Building, and relocate an aging water main just upstream of the Dam. The entire vertical extent of the concrete spillway would be removed between the flanking fishways. The fishways will be left intact to provide stability to the Mordecai Lincoln Road Bridge located just downstream of the spillway. Following removal of the spillway, the stream will be allowed to passively form a new channel through the former impoundment. The Dam's raceway will also be repaired by slip-lining a new pipe through the existing culvert that runs under the Mordecai Lincoln Mill. The existing culvert is corroded, creating a scour hole within the Mill's historic wheelpit, and is contributing to the deterioration of the building's foundation. A concrete support wall will also be poured and riprap hand-placed to reduce scour and repair deterioration caused by the failing culvert.

The Proposed Action will cause an adverse effect to the National Register-eligible Mordecai Lincoln Area and the Mordecai Lincoln Homestead and Mill Complex. The Project will directly impact components of the Mordecai Lincoln Homestead and Mill Complex by permanent removal of Hunters Pond—the Mill's historical impoundment. The Pond lies within the boundaries of the Mordecai Lincoln Area and therefore indirect (visual) impacts may result to the historic Mordecai Lincoln Area from the removal of the impoundment. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Service, the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), and the Town of Scituate was completed that provides stipulations to mitigate the adverse effects of the Project. Stipulations were developed in consultation with the MHC.

Resource agencies, abutters, and other stakeholders have been involved throughout the feasibility, design planning stages, and permitting of the Project. The Project has undergone local, State, and Federal permitting processes. Each permit process requires extensive environmental and planning agency advertisement, as well as ample public notice and involvement. An informational public meeting was held in Scituate on January 10, 2013, with invitations sent to all abutters and other potentially interested parties. A follow-up meeting was held on March 12, 2013 at the request of residents abutting Hunters Pond. Another public meeting was held on February 24, 2015, which was advertised on the Town of Scituate's website, and invitations were sent to all interested parties. A public hearing was completed with an associated site visit to the Project on May 20, 2015 as part of the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act process. A public presentation was given to the Scituate Conservation Commission on September 21, 2016, which was advertised in the local paper, and for which notifications were sent to all project abutters. Information and public input gathered during these meetings were incorporated into the Project's design and alternatives analysis.

The Service finds there will be no significant impacts resulting from the proposed restoration activities of the Project. The Proposed Action provides net benefits that far outweigh its potential impacts on the natural and human environment. Therefore, the Service concludes that a Finding of No Significant Impact be issued for the proposed Project.



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Date

Reference:

Environmental Assessment, dated 5/18/17